

### The Wheat and Tares

Jesus again likens the Kingdom of Heaven, that which he came to set up, to a thing with which his hearers were familiar. He used illustrations. And his illustrations really illustrated. He compared the unseen things with the things which men see and know. He taught the eternal by the things which are temporal and visible.

Said he, The Kingdom of Heaven is like this story; a man sowed good seed in his field; but at night an enemy came and sowed tares, (1) a kind of darnel which until it heads out looks so much like wheat that it cannot be told from it, or (2) a kind of weed with creeping roots which so intertwine with the roots of the wheat that, even tho it can be distinguished from wheat, cannot be pulled up for fear of uprooting the wheat with it.

But to the surprise of the man who sowed the good seed, when the wheat grew up and ripened, behold among his wheat were tares.

### The Mistaken Zeal of the Servants

The farmer's servants came and told him of it and asked if he did not sow good seed. To which he replied that he had, but that an enemy had for spite sown the tares. Then they asked if they should not go and pull up the tares. And the wise farmer said, "Not now, lest you should pull up the wheat with them but wait until the harvest and then you shall separate the one from the other, gathering the wheat into my granary and burning up the tares in the fire."

### The Interpretation

When they went into the house Jesus explained the parable to the disciples at their request. "The *field* is the *world*," said he; "The good seed are the children of the Kingdom of Heaven, i. e., the Christians. The sower is the Son of Man. In our last lesson the seed was the word which Jesus spake. In this the seed is people. The tares are the children of the wicked one. The enemy that sowed them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the world, or age, or dispensation. And the servants who reaped and separated the wheat from the tares are the angels.

As the wheat was gathered into the granary of the farmer, so in the end of this age, shall the children of God be gathered into God's mansions prepared for them. And as the tares burned in the fire, so the children of the wicked one shall be cast into a furnace of fire and there shall be anguish and remorse eternal.

### The Mustard Seed

Jesus used a seed, which in that country was the smallest of seeds, to illustrate the eventual greatness of the Kingdom of God from so small a beginning. On Mt. Calvary amid the scoffs and jeers of a hostile world, with sorrow and blood and tears was the little mustard seed sown. It sank down in darkness. The world did not heed it or care for it. The first disciples were despised and persecuted. But after these centuries it is a force which is filling the earth.

It has become a great tree. And according to prophecy nations are walking in the light of it. There is no force in the world today as mighty, as sure of victory as is the Kingdom of God, known as Christianity. And the end is not yet. And this parable is eternally true. As the Kingdom of God began so humbly in Palestine, so it began a hundred years ago in the mission fields, and so the Gospel a lone doctrine began a few years ago, another mustard seed. And as the small seed grew until it overcame the Roman Empire and civilized the heathens of Europe, so Christianity in heathen lands has silently but surely gone on until today the nations of heathenism are beginning to reckon with it and to see its blessed influence, and the little seed of the Gospel alone doctrine, "the whole Gospel and nothing but the Gospel," shall go on until men shall suddenly awake and find the little seed a great tree.

### The Leaven

Again Jesus said that the Kingdom of Heaven is like yeast which a woman hid in four pecks and a half of flour, until the whole of it was leavened.

This shows the influence and power of Christianity. It began a little thing. It was so small that it could be hid in the world and the world not know it. But it was *alive*. Science teaches us that yeast is a living organism with power to vitalize dead matter like flour. Christianity was small in the beginning and often now in its beginnings in some places, but if it is alive it can leaven the whole lump.

Each leavened particle leavens two more from the center towards the circumference. And thus with ever increasing swiftness the process goes on until the whole world shall be leavened for God.

But each of us Christians, of us particles of flour, when we are reached by the leaven of Christ's love, must leaven some one else to make this work effective.

Are you a dead particle? Or, has Christ leavened you with his love? If he has, are you leavening some one else, or, are you selfishly keeping it to yourself?

### Lesson Applied

- 1 Are you seed of wheat or of tares?
- 2 Each is known by its fruits?
- 3 Fruit-bearing is a characteristic of wheat. That is why it is sown. That explains why God saved you.
- 4 If you are not a child of the Kingdom of Heaven, you are a child of the wicked one, according to this parable. There is no middle ground.
- 5 You will bear fruit according to what you are.
- 6 Some people in the church consider themselves the reapers, to separate the wheat from the tares before the harvest.
- 7 Only the angels are reapers. We are only seed. God has not committed unto us the duty of rooting out, but of reconciliation.
- 8 There is a judgment coming, when the present mixed condition of wheat and tares will cease. And for the tares it is a judg-

ment of "weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth."

9 Do not despise a day of small things. It will develop according to the life in it.

10 Leaven makes the bread fit to eat. The trouble with our old world is, it hasn't enough leaven.

11 God's Kingdom, tho small in its beginning shall triumph over all else. Are you a member of it? J. L. GILLIN.

### The Lesson for Young People

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1 *Let us pay less attention to the tares and more to the wheat.*

Hypocrites! Hypocrites—how much we hear about hypocrites! This is the word that our arch enemy puts oftenest into the lips of persons who make excuse for not confessing Christ. One would almost be led to think that the subject of hypocrites is as important as the subject of salvation. Frankly, we have talked too much about hypocrites. We have given them so much attention that we have harmed the Lord's harvest field. The Master's way is best; he said that the tares should be let alone until harvest time. Then they would get their deserts.

2 *Long patience is needed in all who would do God's work.*

In The Jungle Books the Bandar log, or monkeys, are pictured as the foolish and frivolous people of the jungle. One sign of this is their impatience. They never continue at any one thing. They cannot wait long and silently for their food, like the strong bear or leopard or wolf. With these chattering creatures everything must be done in a minute—and forgotten the next. Perhaps it is not kind to suggest that people are like the Bandar-log in this respect. We are too impatient. We are not willing to wait for causes to grow into effects. The servants of the vineyard were eager to dig up the tares as soon as they appeared. The Master knew better and made them wait. For the end tests everything.

3 *Small beginnings may have great endings.*

An old Scotch elder was asked if anybody had joined his church at its last communion. "Naebody but wee Bobbie Moffatt," he replied, in a discouraged tone of voice. Yet that "wee Bobbie" who "didn't count," became Robert Moffatt, one of the greatest missionaries of the church. We should never despise small things; a great tree is often wrapped up in a mustard seed. When Jesus spoke this parable his kingdom was at its mustard-seed period. It was small and despised. The arrogant Romans ignored it and the haughty Jews scorned it.

4 *We should glory in the greatness of the kingdom of heaven.*

Jingoism is unwise patriotism. It is possible to be too blindly devoted to the interests of one's country. But it is not possible to be too enthusiastic over the kingdom of heaven or too devoted to its glory. What a tree the mustard seed of Galilee has become!